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Sen. Kelly sues the Pentagon over attempts to punish him, declaring it unconstitutional

By **MICHAEL KUNZELMAN**

Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Democratic Sen. Mark Kelly sued the Pentagon on Monday over attempts to punish him for his warnings about illegal orders, claiming the Trump administration trampled on his constitutional rights to free speech.

Kelly, a former U.S. Navy pilot who represents Arizona, is seeking to block his censure from Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth last week. Hegseth announced on Jan. 5 that he censured Kelly over his participation in a video that called on troops to resist unlawful orders. Hegseth said the censure by itself simply a formal letter with little practical consequence was "a necessary process step" to proceedings that could result in a demotion from Kelly's retired rank of captain and subsequent reduction in retirement pay.

Kelly asked the federal court in Washington, D.C., to rule that the censure letter, the proceedings about his rank and any other punishments against him are "unlawful and unconstitu-



Sen. Mark Kelly, D-Ariz., refutes efforts by President Donald Trump and Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth to intimidate him and other lawmakers after expressing concerns over U.S. military strikes against vessels suspected of smuggling drugs in the Caribbean, during a news conference at the Capitol, in Washington, Dec. 1, 2025.

Associated Press

tional."

"The First Amendment forbids the government and its officials from punishing disfavored expression or retaliating against protected speech," his lawsuit says. "That prohibition applies with particular force to legislators speaking on matters

of public policy."

The Pentagon didn't immediately respond to a message seeking comment. The case was assigned to U.S. District Judge Leon, who was nominated to the bench by Republican President George W. Bush. The legal action of a sitting

U.S. senator suing the defense secretary is rare, if not jarring, and the latest effort from members of Congress to push back against what they see as an out-of-control executive branch.

The censure stemmed from Kelly's participation in a video in November with

five other Democratic lawmakers all veterans of the armed services and intelligence community in which they called on troops to uphold the Constitution and not to follow the Trump administration's military directives if they were unlawful.

The 90-second video was first posted on a social media account belonging to Sen. Elissa Slotkin. Reps. Jason Crow, Chris Deluzio, Maggie Goodlander and Chrissy Houlahan also appeared in the video.

Kelly and the other lawmakers have not backed down from their video, which was released as the Pentagon began bombing suspected drug-smuggling boats in the waters near Venezuela. Republican President Donald Trump accused the lawmakers of sedition "punishable by DEATH" in a social media post days later. The Pentagon opened an investigation of Kelly in late November, citing a federal law that allows retired service members to be recalled to active duty on orders of the defense secretary for possible court-martial or other punishment. □

Judge orders HHS to restore funding for children's health programs as lawsuit continues

By **ALI SWENSON**

Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — A federal judge has ordered the Trump administration to restore nearly \$12 million in funding to the American Academy of Pediatrics, including money for rural health care and the early identification of disabilities in young children.

U.S. District Judge Beryl Howell in Washington, D.C., awarded the preliminary injunction late Sunday, siding with AAP in saying evidence showed the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services likely had a "retaliatory motive" when it terminated grants to the pediatric group in December.

"This is not a case about whether AAP or HHS is right

or even has the better position on vaccinations and gender-affirming care for children, or any other public health policy," Howell wrote in her decision. "This

is a case about whether the federal government has exercised power in a manner designed to chill public health policy debate by retaliating against

a leading and generally trusted pediatrician member professional organization focused on improving the health of children." The seven grants terminated in December supported numerous public health programs, including efforts to prevent sudden unexpected infant death, strengthen pediatric care in rural communities and support teens facing substance use and mental health challenges. AAP alleged the cuts were made in retaliation for the group speaking out against the Trump administration's positions and actions. HHS said in letters to AAP that the grants were cut because they no longer aligned with the department's priorities. The department has denied AAP's

allegations of retaliation.

AAP has been vocal about its support for pediatric vaccines and has publicly opposed HHS positions. Health Secretary Robert F. Kennedy Jr. who helped lead the anti-vaccine movement for years has made sweeping changes to childhood vaccine recommendations. Last year, the pediatrics group released its own recommendations on COVID-19 vaccines, which substantially diverged from the government's guidance. The group also supports access to gender-affirming care and has publicly criticized HHS positions on the topic, saying it opposes what it calls the government's infringements on the doctor-patient relationship. □



The Health and Human Services seal is seen before the news conference of Secretary Robert F. Kennedy Jr. at the Hubert Humphrey Building Auditorium in Washington, Wednesday, April 16, 2025.

Associated Press

DOJ investigation of Fed Chair Powell sparks backlash, support for Fed independence

By CHRISTOPHER RUGABER
and JOSH BOAK
Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The Trump administration's criminal investigation of Federal Reserve Chair Jerome Powell appeared on Monday to be emboldening defenders of the U.S. central bank against the efforts of President Donald Trump to control the Fed. The backlash reflected the bigger stakes of a contest about the fate of the Fed's independence, the balance of power within the federal government, and the path of the U.S. economy.

Trump has long publicly lashed out against Powell for not slashing the Fed's benchmark interest rates to his liking, but the prospect of a criminal indictment was a step too far for an institution that has an outsized influence on both inflation and the job market. Several Republican senators have condemned the Department of Justice's subpoenas of the Fed, which Powell revealed Sunday and characterized as "pretexts" to pressure him to sharply cut interest rates as Trump has demanded. Powell also said the Justice Department has threatened criminal indictments over his June testimony to Congress about the cost and design elements of a building renovation.

Trump has repeatedly used investigations which might or might not lead to an actual indictment to attack his political rivals, including Fed governor Lisa Cook, New York Attorney General Letitia James and James Comey, the former FBI director.

White House press secretary Karoline Leavitt told reporters that Trump did not direct his Justice Department to investigate Powell. "One thing for sure, the president's made it quite clear, is Jerome Powell is bad at his job," Leavitt said. "As for whether or not Jerome Powell is a criminal, that's an answer the Department of Justice is going to have to find out."



Federal Reserve Chair Jerome Powell speaks at the Federal Reserve, Dec. 10, 2025, in Washington.
Associated Press

A bipartisan group of former Fed chairs and top economists on Monday compared the Trump administration's actions to moves made in more impoverished countries. Some analysts said that the financial market's muted response reflects a widespread belief that Powell could successfully fend off the allegations that his description to lawmakers of the Fed's \$2.5 billion project was criminal.

"I think this is ham-handed, counter-productive, and going to set back the president's cause," said Jason Furman, an economist at Harvard and former top adviser to President Barack Obama.

It could also unify the Fed's interest-rate setting committee in support of Powell, and means "the next Fed chair will be under more pressure to prove their independence."

The subpoenas apply to the price tag of renovating Fed buildings, including its marble-clad headquarters in Washington, D.C. They come at an unusual moment when Trump was teasing the likelihood of announcing his nominee this month to succeed Powell as the Fed chair, after Trump last summer played down the idea that the Fed's renovation costs

were a fireable offense. While Powell's term as chair ends in May, he has a separate term as a Fed governor until January 2028. Trump's moves could make it more likely that Powell will stay on the Fed's governing board after his term as chair ends in May in order to defend the Fed's independence from politics in making its decisions on interest rates, Furman said.

While an interest rate cut was already considered unlikely at the Fed's next meeting in about two weeks, the news of the Justice Department investigation likely means that the Fed would avoid cuts at the next meeting in order to send the message that it cannot be pressured by politics, economists said.

Powell quickly found a growing number of defenders among Republicans in the Senate, who will have the choice of whether to confirm Trump's planned picks for Fed chair.

Sen. Thom Tillis, a North Carolina Republican and member of the Senate Banking panel, said late Sunday in response to the subpoenas that he would oppose any of the Trump administration's nominees for the Fed, including to replace Powell.

"If there were any remaining doubt whether advisers

within the Trump Administration are actively pushing to end the independence of the Federal Reserve, there should now be none," Tillis said.

Sen. Lisa Murkowski, an Alaska Republican, backed Tillis' approach Monday.

"After speaking with Chair Powell this morning, it's clear the administration's investigation is nothing more than an attempt at coercion," Murkowski said. She voted against the White House's nomination of Stephen Miran to the Fed's board in September, which was barely approved by a 48-47 vote. Miran continues to be Trump's chair of the White House Council of Economic Advisers, although he is on leave due to his post at the Fed. Trump has for the past year sought to pressure Powell into having the Fed slash its benchmark interest rates a move that reflects a fundamental break over whether inflation still poses any risk to the U.S. economy.

Powell maintains that inflation is still elevated in the aftermath of Trump's tariffs and has moved cautiously, whereas Trump claims that inflation is no longer a worry and rates should be dramatically slashed.

"I have carried out my duties without political fear or favor, focused solely on

our mandate of price stability and maximum employment," Powell said in a Sunday night video disclosing the subpoenas. "Public service sometimes requires standing firm in the face of threats."

If Powell stays on the board after his term as chair ends in May, the Trump administration would be deprived of the chance to fill another seat on the board.

Powell has declined at several press conferences to answer questions about his plans. Asked on Monday by reporters if Powell planned to remain a Fed governor, Kevin Hassett, director of the White House National Economic Council and a leading candidate to become Fed chair, said he was unaware of Powell's plans.

"I've not talked to Jay about that," Hassett said.

Powell, jettisoning the cautious approach he has taken since Trump began attacking him last year for not cutting rates sharply enough, said on Sunday the subpoenas were a "pretext" to force the Fed to cut its key short-term interest rate.

Sen. Kevin Cramer, a Republican from North Dakota, a frequent Powell critic, said Monday that he does not think that the Fed chair is "a criminal" and said he hopes that "this criminal investigation can be put to rest quickly," according to CNBC.

The bipartisan group of former Fed chairs and top economists said in their Monday letter that the White House's legal actions and the possible loss of Fed independence could hurt the broader economy.

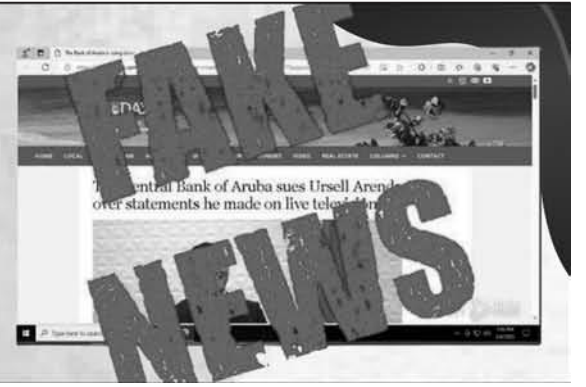
"This is how monetary policy is made in emerging markets with weak institutions, with highly negative consequences for inflation and the functioning of their economies more broadly," the statement said.

"It has no place in the United States whose greatest strength is the rule of law, which is at the foundation of our economic success." □

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3 inmates dead, corrections officer and others injured in Georgia prison fight, police say

DAVISBORO, Ga. (AP) —

Three inmates were killed and a corrections officer and several other inmates were injured when a fight broke out Sunday at a state prison in Georgia, according to local police.

The fight that started among inmates at the Washington State Prison left three inmates dead, Davisboro Police Chief Leondus Dixon said in an email. A corrections officer was injured and 12 inmates were taken to local hospitals for treatment, Dixon said.

The Georgia Department of Corrections had not posted any public statements about the incident to its website or social media accounts by Monday afternoon and had not responded to calls and emails from The Associated Press seeking information. It's not yet clear what prompted the fights or how the inmates were killed and



A warning sign is posted outside Washington State Prison in Davisboro, Ga., Friday Aug. 12, 2022. Associated Press

injured or how the officer was injured. Washington County Deputy Coroner Mark Hodges said there were three deaths related to the incident, but he

didn't have any further information.

The medium security prison in Davisboro, about 130 miles (209 kilometers) southeast of Atlanta, has

a capacity of about 1,550 inmates, according to the Department of Corrections website.

The Department of Corrections is leading the investi-

gation, Dixon said. In addition to Davisboro police, he said the Washington County and Johnson County sheriff's offices and Georgia State Patrol responded to the scene.

The Georgia State Patrol referred questions to the Department of Corrections.

The Department of Justice in 2024 issued a report saying Georgia prison officials are "deliberately indifferent" to unchecked deadly violence, widespread drug use, extortion and sexual abuse at state lockups. The report, following a civil rights investigation, found sophisticated gangs run prison black markets trafficking in drugs, weapons and electronic devices such as drones and smart phones. Investigators also cited a rising number of homicides in Georgia prisons, from seven in 2018 to 35 in 2023. □

Judge rejects lawyer's disputed bid to join ex-Venezuelan President Nicolás Maduro's defense team

By **MICHAEL R. SISAK and LARRY NEUMEISTER**
Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — A federal judge on Monday nixed a former high-ranking Justice Department official's attempt to join the team defending ex-Venezuelan President Nicolás Maduro's defense team, ruling that lawyer Bruce Fein had "no legal basis" to do so.

Judge Alvin K. Hellerstein had initially approved Fein's application to join Maduro's drug trafficking case but reversed course after the deposed leader's actual lawyer, Barry Pollack, objected to his involvement.

Fein, an associate deputy attorney general during Ronald Reagan's presidency, claimed in court papers that "individuals credibly situated" within Maduro's inner circle or family had sought out his assistance. Fein claimed that Maduro "had expressed a desire" for his "assistance in this matter."

But Hellerstein said in a written order that only Maduro has the authority to retain Fein as his lawyer, not unidentified individuals. He rejected Fein's request for the judge to summon Maduro to court to ask him if he would like Fein added to the defense team.

"If Maduro wishes to retain Fein, he has the ability to do so," Hellerstein wrote. "Fein cannot appoint himself to represent Maduro."

Messages seeking comment were left Monday for Fein and Pollack.

Pollack, a prominent Washington lawyer whose clients

have included WikiLeaks founder Julian Assange, was the only lawyer with Maduro at his Jan. 5 arraignment in Manhattan federal court, days after U.S. special forces seized Maduro and his wife, Cilia Flores, from their home in Caracas.

In court, Maduro called it a kidnapping and declared himself a prisoner of war. Pollack told Hellerstein he expected to make "substantial" court filings challenging the legality of his military abduction" and invoking immunity as the head of a sovereign state. □



Bruce Fein testifies on Capitol Hill in Washington, April 1, 2009. Associated Press

London's homicide rate is at a record low as mayor says it disproves Trump's 'dystopian' claims



Mayor of London Sadiq Khan speaks during an interview in London, Monday, Jan. 12, 2026.
Associated Press

By JILL LAWLESS
Associated Press

LONDON (AP) — London's murder rate fell in 2025 to its lowest level in decades, officials said Monday. Mayor Sadiq Khan said the figures disprove claims spread by U.S. President Donald Trump and others on the political right that crime is out of control in Britain's capital.

Police recorded 97 homicides in London in 2025, down from 109 in 2024 and the fewest since 2014. The Metropolitan Police force says the rate by population is the lowest since comparable records began in 1997, at 1.1 homicides for every 100,000 people. That compares to 1.6 per 100,000 in Paris, 2.8 in New York and 3.2 in Berlin, the

force said. "There are some politicians and commentators who've been spamming social media with an endless stream of distortions and untruths, painting an image of a dystopian London," Khan told The Associated Press. "And nothing could be further from the truth." Trump, who has been directing insults at Khan for

a decade, said in September that crime in the city is "through the roof." He has called Khan a "stone-cold loser," a "nasty person" and in front of the U.N. General Assembly in September a "terrible, terrible mayor." Trump has also claimed without foundation that Khan wants to bring Sharia, or Islamic law, to London. City officials say a combination of targeted policing aimed at organized crime and a violence reduction unit that aims to stop young people getting involved with gangs have helped reduce violent crime. A falling murder rate is only part of the story. Many Londoners have firsthand experience of phone-snatching, and shoplifting has surged, according to the Office for National Statistics. The Crime Survey for England and Wales, which asks people about their experience of crime rather than relying on police figures, found overall crime rose by 7% in the year to March 2025 from the previous 12 months, though it remains significantly lower than in 2017.

Arguments that London is a crime-plagued dystopia under Labour Party mayor Khan have mushroomed on social media sites including the Elon Musk-owned X, formerly Twitter, and are echoed by opposition politicians, often tied to anti-immigrant views. "There are certain politicians, certain commentators who have been using London as a punchbag" to fit their own political agenda, Khan said. "London is, in my view, the best city in the world. We are liberal, we are progressive, we are diverse. And we are incredibly successful," he said. Khan said London is the "number one city in the world for tourism, the sporting capital of the world, the cultural capital of the world, more international students than in any city in the world, a record amount of foreign direct investment. Last year, more Americans came to London to study or to work or to invest since records began. So we're the antithesis to everything these nativists believe in. □

China says U.S. shouldn't use other countries as 'pretext' to pursue its interests in Greenland

NUUK, Greenland (AP) — China said Monday that the United States shouldn't use other countries as a "pretext" to pursue its interests in Greenland and said that its activities in the Arctic comply with international law. The comment by a Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson came in response to a question at a regular daily briefing. U.S. President Donald Trump has said that he would like to make a deal to acquire Greenland, a semiautonomous region of NATO ally Denmark, to prevent Russia or China from taking it over. Tensions have grown between Washington, Denmark and Greenland this

month as Trump and his administration push the issue and the White House considers a range of options, including military force, to acquire the vast Arctic island. Danish Prime Minister Mette Frederiksen has warned that an American takeover of Greenland would mark the end of NATO. On Friday, Greenland Prime Minister Jens-Frederik Nielsen and the leaders of the four other parties in the territory's parliament issued a joint statement reiterating that Greenland's future must be decided by its people and emphasizing their "wish that the United States' contempt for our country ends." Trump reiterated his argu-

ment that the U.S. needs to "take Greenland," otherwise Russia or China would, in comments aboard Air Force One on Sunday. He said he'd rather "make a deal" for the territory, "but one way or the other, we're going to have Greenland." China in 2018 declared itself a "near-Arctic state" in an effort to gain more influence in the region. Beijing has also announced plans to build a "Polar Silk Road" as part of its global Belt and Road Initiative, which has created economic links with countries around the world. Asked in Beijing Monday about U.S. statements that it is necessary for Washington to take over Green-

land to prevent China and Russia from taking control, Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson Mao Ning replied that "China's activities in the Arctic are aimed at promoting peace, sta-

bility, and sustainable development in the region and are in accordance with international law." She didn't elaborate on those activities. □



A boat rides through a frozen sea inlet outside of Nuuk, Greenland, on March 6, 2025.

Associated Press

Displaced Aleppo residents return home after days of intense clashes

By **GHAITH ALSAYED**
Associated Press

ALEPPO, Syria (AP) — Hundreds of displaced residents returned Monday to an Aleppo neighborhood in northern Syria after days of intense fighting between government forces and Kurdish fighters.

The clashes, which killed at least 23 people and displaced tens of thousands, broke out on Jan. 6 in the predominantly Kurdish neighborhoods of Achrafieh, Sheikh Maqsoud and Bani Zeid after the government and the Syrian Democratic Forces, the main Kurdish-led force in the country, failed to make progress on implementation of a deal that would merge the SDF into the national army. Security forces captured the three neighborhoods.

On Monday, armed security forces stood guard as traffic flowed normally through the streets of Achrafieh, while buses carried displaced families back to the neighborhood. Many shops had reopened, although residents complained about electricity cuts.

Jamal al-Youssef, an Arab resident, fled with his family for about four days because of the fighting. He said he welcomed the de-



Displaced residents return to a the Achrafieh neighborhood after days of fighting between government forces and Kurdish fighters in the northern city of Aleppo, Syria, Monday, Jan. 12, 2026. (

Associated Press

parture of the Kurdish fighters and the government's exertion of control over the neighborhood.

"We've been waiting for this to happen for a long time, not just recently," al-Youssef said, but added quickly that there was no issue between Arab and Kurdish civilians in the area. "We have three or four Kurdish families in my building and we don't feel there's any difference between us."

The majority of some

148,000 displaced people had fled to the district of Afrin in the northwest of Aleppo province. About 10 buses carrying 700 families returned to Achrafieh on Monday, said Masoud Battal, director of the Afrin region for the Syrian government.

"I left Achrafieh five days ago. I was in Afrin and now we're returning to our homes, thank God," said Mohammed Sheikho, who was on one of the buses.

Meanwhile, crews were

combing through the neighborhood of Sheikh Maqsoud to decommission leftover explosives and tow away destroyed vehicles blocking the roads. Security forces were also inspecting tunnels under the neighborhood that appeared to have been used by fighters. Some of the factions that make up the new Syrian army, formed after the ouster of former President Bashar Assad in a rebel offensive in December 2024, were previously Turkey-

backed insurgent groups that have a long history of clashing with Kurdish forces. The SDF has for years been the main U.S. partner in Syria in fighting against the Islamic State group, but Turkey considers the SDF a terrorist organization because of its association with the Kurdistan Workers' Party, or PKK, which has waged a long-running insurgency in Turkey.

Last week's fighting between the two sides was the most intense since the fall of Assad to insurgents in December 2024. At least 23 people were killed in five days of clashes amid shelling and drone strikes.

Hundreds of Kurdish fighters evacuated from the contested area in Aleppo to northeastern Syria, which is under the control of the SDF, over the weekend under a deal reached between the SDF and government authorities.

However, tensions remained high between the two sides.

Syria's state-run news agency SANA reported Monday evening that the Syrian army sent reinforcements to the deployment line east of Aleppo after seeing a buildup of SDF forces in the eastern Aleppo countryside near the towns of Mas kana and Deir Hafer. □

Mexican president tells Trump that U.S. intervention against cartels is 'unnecessary'

MEXICO CITY (AP) — Sheinbaum said she had Mexico President Claudia "a very good conversa-



Mexican President Claudia Sheinbaum presents a new security strategy against violence for Michoacan state, at the National Palace, in Mexico City, Nov. 9, 2025.

Associated Press

tion" with U.S. President Donald Trump on Monday and that their two governments will continue working together on security issues without the need for U.S. intervention against drug cartels.

The approximately 15-minute call came after Sheinbaum said Friday she had requested dialogue with the Trump administration at the end of a week in which he had said he was ready to confront drug cartels on the ground and repeated the accusation that cartels were running Mexico.

Trump has repeatedly offered to send the U.S. military after the cartels and Sheinbaum has always declined, but after the U.S. removal of Venezuelan President Nicolás Maduro, Trump's comments about Mexico, Cuba and Greenland carried new weight.

"He (Trump) asked me my opinion about what they had done in Venezuela and I told him very clearly that our constitution is very clear, that we do not agree with interventions and that was it," Sheinbaum said.

Trump "still insisted that if

we ask for it, they could help" with military forces, which Sheinbaum said she again rejected. "We told him, so far it's going very well, it's not necessary, and furthermore there is Mexico's sovereignty and territorial integrity and he understood."

In an interview with Fox News aired last Thursday, Trump said, "We've knocked out 97% of the drugs coming in by water and we are going to start now hitting land, with regard to the cartels. The cartels are running Mexico. It's very sad to watch." □

Why You Should Not Miss Aruba's Free City Center Street Car Tour

(Oranjestad)—Aruba's City Center Street Car – or as we call it in Dutch; "Tram van Oranjestad" – is a single track tram line in Oranjestad, the capital city of Aruba. It was inaugurated on 22 December 2012, being the first and so far the only passenger rail service on Aruba and the rest of the Dutch Caribbean. There are two trolleys, a single-deck one with 42 seats and a double-decker with 64 seats. The line was inspired by the popular battery-powered streetcar operation at the Grove in Los Angeles, USA. Aruba's streetcars are powered by hydrogen fuel cells, which are charged by the island's year-round trade winds.

Caya Betico Croes, mostly referred to as our "main street" has been developed into a pollution-free pedestrian mall. The double-decker offers you a 360 degree view of the down town area with a picture perfect scenery of the island's clear blue skies. Who would not enjoy a ride on this beautiful and naturally air-conditioned vehicle? The tour consists of a total of 9 stops approximately 200 meters apart from each other; all stops are clearly marked. The tram will bring you close to different museums, historical plazas, monuments, the Protestant church, Aruba's high-end mall, retail shops, and a variety of local and international cuisine restaurants. The "I love Aruba" trademark also belongs to that list. The third stop on the route is close to a 5-minute walk to the famous Renaissance Marina showcasing luxurious yachts and Aruba's blue waters.

The "Tram van Oranjestad" starts from a balloon loop near the Port of Call and serves the downtown area and ends at Plaza Nicky. The first ride starts at 10:00 am sharp with intervals of 25 minutes. The last trolley departs from the cruise port at 5:00 pm. Don't miss this tour of the beautiful Aruba's City Center – it is free for all! □



Beaches for the whole family to enjoy!

(Oranjestad)—One of the biggest concerns that parents have when traveling with their children is a guarantee of their safety and healthy enjoyment. Therefore, we thought it would be a great help to traveling parents to list off some the most family-friendly beaches around the island.

the mangrove trees near the entrance sign. Here, there are small and big palapas, perfect for big and small families to set up their belongings. In this area, the shore is also shallow, falling right around your knee before slowly getting deeper: perfect for kids to safely play.

Eagle Beach/Palm Beach
Yet another highly popular beach sites, Eagle Beach and Palm Beach is where most of our visitors go to tan, swim or play in the white sand. Because they are near the low-rise and high-rise hotel areas, these beaches are the most accessible for visitors on foot. These beaches also offer

many palapas free to use, but you can also rent chairs and tents. Much like Baby Beach, these sites are one of the best beaches for your children to play and build sand castles.

Boca Catalina in Malmok
Boca Catalina is a small bay beach near the Malmok

beach area further down the hotel areas. Though it may not be a very sandy beach, it is relatively quiet and tranquil. This is a great place for family to lay down a big blanket and have a little picnic. This is also one of the best places to snorkel, as this area is filled with little fish and corals, even close to the shore. □

Baby Beach in San Nicolas

Baby Beach is one Aruba's most popular and visited beaches, and for good reason: This sandy and quiet lagoon is a great place for parents to sit back and relax while their children play in the shallow shores of the beach. Beside the relaxing atmosphere, there are also several services that may accommodate your stay, like a parking lot, sun tent rentals, chairs, bathrooms and a snack bar right at the far left of the beach.

Mangel Halto in Pos Chiquito

Mangel Halto is situated in the back streets of Pos Chiquito. Though there are several stairs on the sides of the beach cliff leading you down, the best spot for families to hang out is across the bridge, passed





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Po-Ké Ono Brings Bold Asian Fusion to Aruba's Dining Scene

Innovative eatery blends island culture with modern Asian cuisine



In a culinary landscape known for its diversity and creativity, Po-Ké Ono stands out as a vibrant and contemporary addition to Aruba's restaurant scene. With locations at Azure in Palm Beach and the Renaissance Marketplace in Oranjestad, the concept introduces a refreshing take on Asian fusion dining—casual in style, yet refined in execution.

Established in 2020, Po-Ké Ono was envisioned as a space where flavor, culture, and creativity intersect. The menu features an array of signature dishes including poke bowls, steamed bao, and sushi, crafted with precision and a focus on freshness. Drawing on Asian influences, the restaurant delivers bold flavors in an approachable format, appealing to a broad audience of locals and visitors alike.

The ambiance is designed to be welcoming and relaxed, with a philosophy centered

around accessibility and enjoyment. Whether dining indoors or grabbing a quick bowl on the go, guests can expect a consistently high standard in both service and cuisine. With extensive menu options, including selections for vegan diners, Po-Ké Ono caters to a wide range of tastes and dietary preferences.

While the concept leans into fast-casual dining, the quality of ingredients and thoughtful



preparation reflect fine-dining roots. Many of the restaurant's core ingredients are sourced locally, emphasizing sustainability and support for Aruba's agricultural community. The result is a dining experience that honors both the island's spirit and the culinary traditions it draws inspiration from.

Open daily from 11:00 AM to 10:00 PM, Po-Ké Ono continues to gain recognition as one of the island's premier destinations for sushi, poke, and

bao. Its growing popularity is a testament to Aruba's evolving food culture—one that embraces global influence while staying rooted in community and craft.

For those seeking a modern taste of Asia in the heart of the Caribbean, Po-Ké Ono offers a flavorful and memorable experience worth exploring. □



Aruba to me: "We love Aruba!"



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tion.

Last but not least: check out our website, Instagram and Facebook page! Thank you for supporting our free newspaper, we strive to make you a happy reader every day again.

For today we received a lovely message from Jimmy and Kristin from North Carolina.

They wrote to us saying: "This is my 6th visit & Jimmy's 2nd. This visit was a Christmas present for Jimmy. He said it was the best gift he's ever received. We love Aruba!"

Thank you for sending us this wonderful message sharing what Aruba means to you with us and our readers! □

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In the Carnival Spirit

We have our winners for the Calypso & Roadmarch Kids and Teens competition!

(Oranjestad)—One of the most colorful and lively seasons of our island has begun: Carnival 72. This is where our beautiful culture shines, and the great amount of talent across all generations takes center stage.

During this past weekend, several events connected to Carnival 72 took place. Among them were the Calypso & Roadmarch Kids and Teens competitions.

Below is the list of winners from this successful and wonderful evening.

Infant category winners:

Best Costume – Haily Philips
Most Atmosphere – Adeliza Henriquez
Most Popular – Ashandric Richardson
Rookie of the Year – Zaidyen Danker

The Calypso King title went to Ashandric Richardson – Jammer Jr. with "Help Me", arranged by Michael Odor and composed by Charles Hooker.

The Roadmarch King/Queen title



went to Adeliza Henriquez – Queen Fantasy with "Dutch Troopers", arranged and composed by Harvey "Tools" Agunbero.

Second place for Calypso went to Carl Jr. Roosberg – Galloway Jr. with "In My Dreams", arranged by Samuel Jack and composed by Carl Roosberg Sr. Second place for Roadmarch went to Zaidyen Danker – Johnny Boy with "Johnny Boy The Instructor", arranged by Rygel Isabella and composed by Janiro Eidsen and Rygel Isabella.

Third place for Roadmarch went to Ashandric Richardson – Jammer Jr. with "Carnaval is a Party", arranged by Rygel Isabella and composed by Aric Richardson.

Teens category winners:

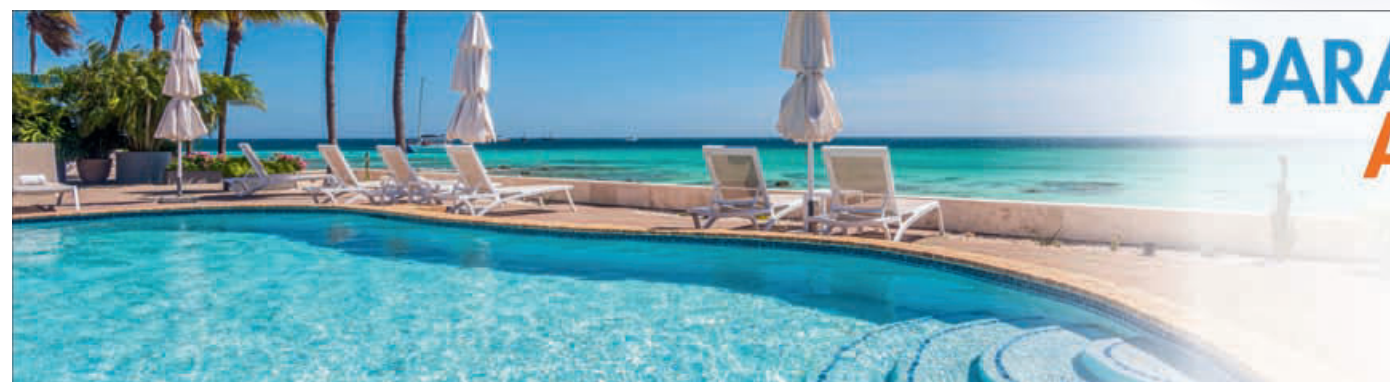
Best Costume – Reanne Ras
Most Atmosphere – Justin Trinidad
Most Popular – Justin Trinidad

The Calypso Queen title went to Caylee Pietersz – Dancing Cay with "We Calling for Change", arranged and composed by Dolfi Richardson. The Roadmarch King title went to Brayden Elisabeth – Stinging B Junior with "Tribe Chief", arranged and composed by Rygel Isabella together with Janiro Eidsen.

Second place for Calypso went to Ivy-Anne Browne – Queen Ivy with "Always Number One", arranged by Ralph Godet and composed by Marina Hayes. Third place went to Caylee Fraser – Queen C with "You Belong", arranged and composed by Kenneth Bosnie together with Carol Bruining.

Second place for Roadmarch went to Reanne Ras – Reanne with "What Time Is It", arranged and composed by Rygel Isabella together with Janiro Eidsen, and third place went to Stephanie Quant – Stephanie with "Carnaval Possess Meh", arranged by Rodney van der Biezen and composed by Maiky "Campo" Oliva.

A big congratulations goes out to all the winners and participants of this year's Calypso & Roadmarch Kids and Teens edition. □



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Aruba

Unique fauna of Aruba

For a small island, Aruba sure has a lot of unique treasures. Among these, we have some subspecies of animals that are unique to our island. These have evolved to perfectly adapt to our desert climate and make Aruba their home. At the same time, they are part of what makes Aruba truly one of a kind.

Cascabel (rattlesnake, *Crotalus durissus unicolor*)

According to the Arikok National Park, Aruba knows two kinds of snakes, the Santanero and the Cascabel. The cascabel belongs to the rattlesnake family. The cascabel is the only venomous snake from Aruba. It has a length of 65cm to 100cm, and is about 4 to 5cm wide. Its color varies from light brown to grey-brown, and its underbelly is white. On its back there are marks that are a little darker, in the shape of diamonds.

Its reproduction is oviparous, meaning the offspring can hatch from their eggs just before, during or immediately after laying.

The cascabel lives mainly in the Arikok National Park. It likes to live in dark places, and is thus found hidden among the limestone rocks and under stones. As a defense mechanism, the cascabel uses its rattle as a warning, and it is not an aggressive animal.

The cascabel feeds on lizards, small mammals such as rats and mice. It paralyzes or kills its prey with its venom, which is injected through a bite. The enemies of the cascabel are donkeys, goats, humans and cars. Humans are the biggest enemy of the cascabel, as they kill them and destroy their habitat for

urbanization.

Shoco (burrowing owl, *Athene cunicularia arubensis*)

The shoco is a small bird which is seldom seen. They are active during the day but are more active later in the day and at night for hunting. These owls have very good night vision and very good hearing. The shoco is the national symbol of Aruba.

The shoco has about 20cm of length, and the females are slightly heavier than the males. They are light brown in color, with many white spots. The belly of the shoco is either white or light brown, and the shoco has striking yellow eyes. Its beak is yellow/green. Young owls do not have white spots and are lighter in color.

The nest of the shoco is a burrow in the ground. If the shoco cannot find a burrow, it will dig one in soft soil. The shoco lays one or two eggs every other day until all the eggs are laid – a shoco can lay up to four eggs. The first owlets hatch after three to four weeks. The shoco owl takes care of the owlets for three months until they leave the nest. Only a few owlets survive.

The owls dig burrows in the ground with low grass vegetation. An owl can live up to nine years.

Its defense mechanism is simply to fly away or retreat to its burrows. They eat mostly insects, mice and lizards, and the main threats to their survival are boas – an invasive species introduced by humans as pets – and humans through destruction of their habitat.



Prikichi (parakeet, *Aratinga pertinax*)

The Prikichi is the national bird of Aruba. On Aruba, Bonaire, and Curaçao, parakeets can be found, but each of the three islands has a different breed. The Yellow-shouldered Amazon parakeet that we have on Aruba is also found along the coast of Venezuela. Unfortunately, there is interbreeding between the breeds due to cage birds from, for example, Curaçao being released on Aruba. The parakeet population on Aruba is in danger due to extensive deforestation occurring on the island because of the growing population.

The prikichi weighs between 90 to 100 grams. It has a greenish-brown head with some yellow around the eye. The back and wings of the parakeet are dark green, and the underside of the body is a lighter shade of green. There is also a bit of blue in the wings. The parakeet's beak is gray/black.

Parakeets often use termite nests as breeding sites. Parakeets are found in all natural environments (mondi) of the island. It defends itself by

flying away and loud cries. Parakeets eat seeds from the pods of the Kwihi tree, Divi Divi, and columnar cactus. They also consume natural fruits. Its main predators are boa constrictors, humans.

Coneu (cottontail rabbit, *Sylvilagus floridanus nigronuchalis*)

The Eastern Cottontail rabbit (*Sylvilagus floridanus*) was probably brought over to the island by Indian settlers thousands of years ago as a source of food. This rabbit, locally known as Coneu, has spread all over the island and has become part of our ecosystem. The very adaptable Coneu can live in a wide variety of habitats, including Aruba's xeric scrublands, where it typically grazes on weeds and grasses.

The Aruban Coneu has a brownish grey color and a distinctive white belly. This white fur extends to the bottom of the tail which becomes visible as the rabbit runs. These rabbits can grow up to approximately 40 centimeters in length over their short lifespan of 3 years. Cottontail rabbits reach reproductive maturity when they

are just 2 to 3 months old. A female rabbit, called a doe, finds a suitable nest spot under a shrub or rocks and lines it with fur. She can have an average of 3 to 4 litters per year averaging 5 young each. The doe only visits her young once or twice a day to nurse her babies for a period of 2 to 3 weeks. The young reach independence at 4 to 5 weeks.

The Aruban Coneu is an endangered species and protected by Aruban law. The Coneu is thought to have drastically declined due to an increase in human activities, habitat fragmentation and predation by the invasive Boa constrictor as well as feral cats and dogs. However, recently there seem to be more rabbit sightings in rural and wilderness areas and also in the National Park. This could be linked to a recent decline of the invasive Boa population after the long period of drought. As the Coneu can reproduce very quickly, a short break in predation pressure can lead to a fast increase of rabbits. These are but a few of Aruba's beautiful inhabitant, which we must all contribute to protect. □



Meet Aruba's biggest hero, Boy Ecury

(Oranjestad)—As part of the Kingdom of the Netherlands and due to its strategic geolocation, Aruba was unexpectedly involved in the Second World War. As is known around the globe, this chapter in world history is one of the most tragic yet, and many soldiers and rebels have died on the front line during this time.

One of those rebels who have fought against the Nazi regime, was an Aruban named Segundo Jorge Adelberto "Boy" Ecury. Born in Aruba on April 23rd, 1922, Boy spent his childhood on the island, before being sent to The Netherlands by his father when he was 15 years old to continue his studies abroad. This was in 1937, three years before WWII broke out. During the war, he actively participated in the rebellion in The Netherlands against the Nazi regime, but his rebellious streak and constant drive to fight for justice began even before the war broke out. Being a person of color with a Haitian heritage living in The Netherlands made him vulnerable to discrimination, and this inspired him to be an activist, to stand up and fight against discrimination and oppression.

After seeing the horrific bomb-

ings of Rotterdam first-hand, he decided to join the resistance. At the same time, he was still studying and living with family in Tilburg. It was there where he met people who printed and distributed the rebellion newspaper. This would be the first of three rebellion group that he would join throughout his 4-year service to the resistance.

Boy's primary task as member of the group was to distract the German soldiers while others ran into hiding into alleyways. This he was able to do because of his skin color and confronting demeanor. Boy also participated in the multi-



ple sabotaging operations against the German military occupying The Netherlands. These included bombings on German military trucks and trains. The group also helped people go into hiding, as well as opened fire against allies of the Nazi regime. In these operations, Boy really stood out for his cold bloodedness.

In 1943, he received a notice to be placed for work in Germany. This he refused, of course, and went into hiding using multiple addresses in multiple cities. Because he was a wanted man, he of course could not continue to be active as a rebel. However, stubborn and naturally rebellious as he was, he always tried to join in on the operations regardless.

In 1944, after his friend Luis de Lanoy, a fellow rebel from Curacao, was arrested and executed, he moved to Delft, where he joined his third and last group in Rotterdam. During this time, he wrote a goodbye letter for his family, possibly knowing the risks of him being active again in the big cities.

Eventually, he proved himself right. On November 5th, 1944, Boy Ecury was arrested by German soldiers. He was placed in the "Oranje-hotel" prison in Scheveningen, The Hague, where he was questioned.



Despite being sold out by an acquaintance, he himself never gave away the names of his comrades. Famously, he told his cell mate: "I will die with a smile on my face."

On November 6th, 1944, Ecury was executed. He was only 22 years old.

Ecury was buried with military honor. In 1949, the Aruban Government erected a monumental bust of him in front of what is now the linear park trail, and in 1984 he received the Resistance Memorial Cross postmortem.

Boy's life motto was this: "In my father's house, there is no place for a traitor." □

Source: "De Kolibrie op de Rots (en meer over the geschiedenis van Aruba)" by Evert Bongers.

The Bushiribana Gold Mill Ruins and its history

(Oranjestad)—The Bushiribana Gold Mill Ruins is one of the most visited places by tourists on the island, as it lies along the northern coast line near the mini pool and on the way to the Natural Bridge. Despite its seemingly plain appearance, this ruin represents one of the most important histories of the island: The Aruban Gold Rush.

Built in 1872 by English company Aruba Island Gold Mining Company Ltd, the gold mill at Bushiribana was constructed in the area where most gold was found by locals. The story of gold on Aruba actually dates back to 1725, when a first explo-

ration for gold on the island was commissioned by the Dutch West India Company. Under the leadership of Mr. Paulus Printz, a three-year search was conducted on Aruba, to no avail. Though they found some gold, it was enough to motivate a further search, and the assignment was discontinued by Printz himself.

It wasn't until 100 years later, in 1824, when a young boy found a lump of gold while out herding his father's sheep. His father took it to a local merchant who then sold the lump for \$70. Unbeknownst to the boy and his father, they quite



literally struck gold, and as word got out, a gold fever spread among the locals who started searching for more gold. About 25 pounds worth was found.

At the same time, the Aruban government took immediate actions, and informed Curacao that gold was found. At first, everyone could look for gold, as long as they sold it to the government. However, after some time, the government decided to implement

stricter rules and banned local search parties.

Over the years, concession-holding had seen different companies from around the world, all of which used primitive methods to dig and carve out gold from the rocks. Aruba Island Gold Mining Company Ltd. was no different, but used a unique method that involved grinding the rocks and letting the dust be blown away by the strong northeast wind, leav-

ing clumps of gold behind. The next step was melting the gold and letting it attach to quicksilver in order to obtain pure gold. All these processes were done at the Bushiribana Gold Mill.

The gold mill itself had a short life-span: only 10 years in service, but its structure remained relatively solid till this day, and is now a historical remnant. □

Sources: Etnia Nativa



CROSSWORD

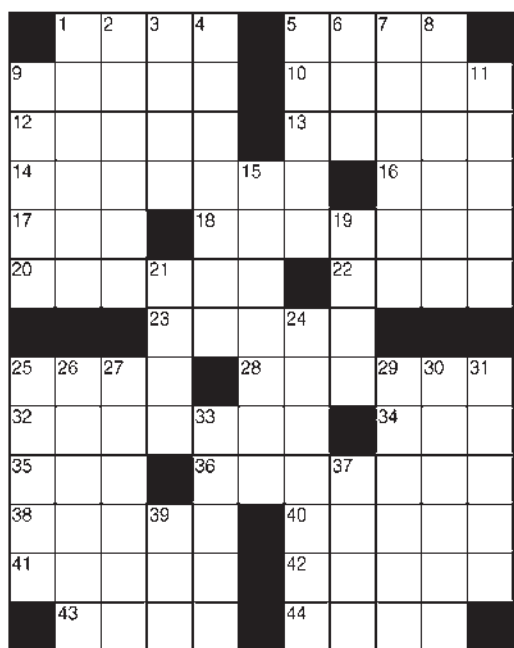
By THOMAS JOSEPH

- ACROSS**
- 40 Rat's home
- 1 Rugged rock
- 41 Biscotti
- 5 Captain of flavor
- fiction
- 42 Wipe off
- 9 Espresso layer
- 43 Apertures
- 44 Earth tones
- 10 Isaac's mother
- 12 Jacket part
- 13 Intent look
- 14 Greed
- 16 Butter unit
- 17 Month in Marseilles
- 18 Wooden grid
- 20 "Silkwood" star
- 22 Stately trees
- 23 French landscape painter
- 25 Choir voice
- 28 Words on a November sticker
- 32 Ornamental molding
- 34 Chopping tool
- 35 CBS series with spinoffs
- 36 Waiter's job
- 38 Foe



DOWN

- 1 Neck-wear
- 2 Fix
- 3 From the U.S.
- 4 Telescope pioneer
- 5 Useful skill
- 6 Bowler, e.g.
- 7 Mideast area
- 8 Malia's dad
- 9 Smackers fodder
- 11 Toast start
- 15 Whim island
- 19 Visitor to Oz
- 21 Bus. sch. pioneer
- 24 Like spots
- 25 Capital of Ghana
- 26 Behind
- 27 Quiz show
- 29 Asian
- 30 Too much
- 31 Plow
- 33 Resort
- 37 Designer Wang
- 39 Pharaoh's symbol



1-21

AXYDLBAAXR
is LONGFELLOW

One letter stands for another. In this sample, A is used for the three L's, X for the two O's, etc. Single letters, apostrophes, the length and formation of the words are all hints. Each day the code letters are different.

1-21 CRYPTOQUOTE

MNQ QNAXCHBKG PS PZ SMES
ANINXR ACCX QEPS E ZPADGC
VNVCAS ICBNHC ZSEHSPAD SN
PVUHNVC SMC QNHGX.

— EAAC BHEAT

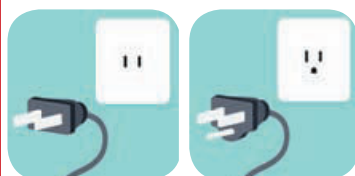
Cryptoquote: LEAD FROM THE BACK — AND LET OTHERS BELIEVE THEY ARE IN FRONT. — NELSON MANDELA

Cruise ship Schedule: Jan. 13 - 18 2026

			ARR	DEPT	BERTH	
TUE	13	CARNIVAL MAGIC	07.00	16.00	B	1
		CELEBRITY SILHOUETTE	08.00	23.00	C	1
		SERENADE OF THE SEAS	08.00	23.00	I	1
WED	14	ROTTERDAM	08.00	17.00	B	1
		BRITANNIA	07.00	18.00	C	1
		OASIS OF THE SEAS	08.00	23.00	I	1
		FREEWINDS	06.00	****	E	1
THU	15	COSTA PACIFICA	07.00	22.00	B	1
		CARNIVAL VENEZIA	09.00	22.00	C	1
		NORWEGIAN SKY	11.00	20.00	I	1
SAT	17	STAR PRIDE	06.00	16.00	B	1
		ZUIDERDAM	08.00	17.00	C	1
		AIDAPERLA	09.00	22.00	I	1
SUN	18	MARELLA DISCOVERY	08.00	20.00	B	1
		OCEANIA INSIGNIA	11.30	22.00	C	1
		FREEWINDS - Dept.	****	22.30	E	-

Helpful tips for your stay on Aruba

(Oranjestad)—When traveling to another country, especially for the first time, it is always better to be over-prepared than under-prepared. That is why we have a list of basic but important information that we think may come in handy to Aruba's visitors.



Electrical power

Aruba generally operates on 110V to 127V supply voltage and 60Hz. There are also three types of outlets used on the island: type A with two flat prongs; type B with two flat and one grounding prong, and on occasion, type F with two round prong and two earth clips on the side. However, Type A is most commonly found in homes and establishments.



Supermarket hours

Supermarket hours may vary depending on where you are staying on the island. Generally though, most supermarkets are open from 8am to 8 or 10pm, Monday through Saturday. On Sundays, supermarkets generally close earlier; mostly around 2pm.



Safety

Since February 2024, Aruba has been categorized as the safest country in the Caribbean by The Telegraph, and many tourist that visit have often told us how they feel safe to explore the island or walk around at night. However, rare incidents do occur, so keep yourself and your belongings safe.

SUDOKU

To play sudoku, use logic to fill the empty squares so that each row, each column and each 3x3 box contains the numbers 1-9 only once. Puzzle difficulty increases from Monday to Sunday.

King Classic Sudoku

	1	5	4		3	6		
			2			9	3	1
8	3		1					4
4			7		8	2	6	9
2								
	8	1	5	2	9	7	4	
	7	4	8	6	2		9	
	6				1			7
			3					6

Difficulty: ★★

1/13

Answer to previous puzzle

4	9	5	3	7	8	1	6	2
6	1	7	5	2	9	8	4	3
8	3	2	6	4	1	5	7	9
7	6	1	9	5	4	3	2	8
5	4	8	1	3	2	7	9	6
9	2	3	8	6	7	4	5	1
1	8	6	4	9	5	2	3	7
3	7	4	2	1	6	9	8	5
2	5	9	7	8	3	6	1	4

Difficulty: ★

1/12

Apple calls on Google to help smarten up Siri and bring other AI features to the iPhone



A woman walks by a giant screen with a logo at an event at the Paris Google Lab on the sidelines of the AI Action Summit in Paris, on Feb. 9, 2025.

Associated Press

By **MICHAEL LIEDTKE**
AP Technology Writer

Apple will rely on Google to help finish its efforts to smarten up its virtual assistant Siri and bring other artificial intelligence features to the iPhone as the trendsetting company plays catch up in technology's latest craze. The deal allowing Apple to tap into Google's AI technology was disclosed Monday in a joint statement from the Silicon Valley powerhouses. The partnership will draw upon Google's Gemini technology to customize a suite of AI features dubbed "Apple Intelligence" on the iPhone and other products. After Google and others took the early lead in the AI race, Apple promised to plant its first big stake in the field with an array of new features that were supposed to be coming to the iPhone in 2024 as part of a ballyhooed software upgrade. But many of Apple's AI features remain in the development phase, while Google and Samsung have been rolling out more of the technology on their own devices. One of the most glaring AI omissions on the iPhone has been a promised overhaul of Siri that was supposed to transform the often-confused assistant into a more conversational and versatile multitasker. □

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Divi Phoenix
Palm beach
Penthouse 2 BR WK # 1 room
672
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Imsan 24 hours
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PHARMACY ON DUTY

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Paradera: Tel.588 6638
San Nicolas:
Centro Medico:Tel.584 5794

OTHER

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Blood Bank Aruba 587 0002
Urgent Care 586 0448
Walk-In Doctor's Clinic
+297 588 0539

EMERGENCY

Police	100
Oranjestad	527 3140
Noord	527 3200
Sta. Cruz	527 2900
San Nicolas	584 5000
Police Tipline	11141
Ambulancia	911
Fire Dept.	115
Red Cross	582 2219

TAXI SERVICES

Taxi Tas	587 5900
Prof. Taxi	588 0035
Taxi D.T.S.	587 2300
Taxi Serv. Aruba	583 3232
A1 Taxi Serv.	280 2828

TRAVEL INFO

Aruba Airport	524 2424
American Airlines	582 2700
Avianca	588 0059
Jet Blue	588 2244
Surinam	582 7896

AID FOUNDATIONS

Aruba Food Bank
Tel. 588 0002
FAVI- Visually Impaired
Tel. 582 5051
Alcoholics Anonymous
Tel. 736 2952
Narcotics Anonymous
Tel. 583 8989
Fundacion Contra Violencia
Relacional Tel. 583 5400
Centre for Diabetes
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Tel. 582 4433
Quota Club Tel. 525 2672

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ARUBA TODAY NEWS

Trump pushes a 1-year, 10% cap on credit card interest rates and banks balk

By **KEN SWEET and SEUNG MIN KIM**
Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — Reviving a campaign pledge, President Donald Trump wants a one-year, 10% cap on credit card interest rates, a move that could save Americans tens of billions of dollars but drew immediate opposition from an industry that has been in his corner. Trump was not clear in his social media post Friday night whether a cap might take effect through executive action or legislation, though one Republican senator said he had spoken with the president and would work on a bill with his "full support." Trump said he hoped it would be in place Jan. 20, one year after he took office.

Strong opposition is certain from Wall Street in addition to the credit card companies, which donated heavily to his 2024 campaign and have supported Trump's second-term agenda.



Visa and Mastercard credit cards are shown in Buffalo Grove, Ill., Feb. 8, 2024.

Associated Press

Banks are making the argument that such a plan would most hurt poor people, at a time of economic concern, by curtailing or eliminating credit lines, driving them to high-cost alternatives like payday loans or pawnshops.

"We will no longer let the

American Public be ripped off by Credit Card Companies that are charging Interest Rates of 20 to 30%," Trump wrote on his Truth Social platform.

Researchers who studied Trump's campaign pledge after it was first announced found that Americans

would save roughly \$100 billion in interest a year if credit card rates were capped at 10%. The same researchers found that while the credit card industry would take a major hit, it would still be profitable, although credit card rewards and other perks might be scaled back.

About 195 million people in the United States had credit cards in 2024 and were assessed \$160 billion in interest charges, the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau says. Americans are now carrying more credit card debt than ever, to the tune of about \$1.23 trillion, according to figures from the New York Federal Reserve for the third quarter last year. Further, Americans are paying, on average, between 19.65% and 21.5% in interest on credit cards according to the Federal Reserve and other industry tracking sources. That has come down in the past year as the central bank lowered benchmark rates, but is near the highs since federal regulators started tracking credit card rates in the mid-1990s. That's significantly higher than a decade ago, when the average credit card interest rate was roughly 12%.

The Republican administration has proved particularly friendly until now to the credit card industry. □



Editor
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RBC Royal Bank Acc. #1330772

Editors

Pilar Flores
Richard Brooks
Angenette Figueroa
Oriana Geerman

Sales

Mark Gomes
Sulaika Croes

Classifieds

classified@cspnv.com

Distribution and Collection

accounting@bondia.com

Social / Website

Juan Luis Pinto

Weststraat 22
T: 582-7800

E: news@arubatoday.com
W: www.arubatoday.com
f @ArubaTodayNews

Meta names former Trump adviser Dina Powell McCormick as president and vice chairman

By **WYATTE GRANTHAM-PHILIPS**

AP Business Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — Facebook owner Meta has named Dina Powell McCormick, a former Trump administration adviser and

longtime finance executive, as president and vice chairman of the tech giant.

Powell McCormick previously served on Meta's board of directors where, the company notes, she

was "deeply engaged" in accelerating its artificial intelligence push across platforms. In her new management role, Meta says Powell McCormick will help guide its overall strategy, including the execution of multi-billion-dollar investments.

The news, announced Monday, quickly gained the applause of U.S. President Donald Trump. In a post on his social media platform Truth Social, the Republican president said the move was a "great choice" by Meta CEO Mark Zuckerberg and noted that Powell McCormick had "served the Trump Administration with strength and distinction."

Zuckerberg said in a statement that Powell McCormick's experience in global finance, "combined

with her deep relationships around the world," made her "uniquely suited to help Meta" in its future growth.

Powell McCormick is a veteran of two presidential administrations and the Republican National Committee. She worked as a national security adviser at the start of Trump's first term, and also held roles in the White House and the Secretary of State's office under President George W. Bush. She is married to U.S. Sen. David McCormick, who served in high-level positions in the Commerce and Treasury departments under Bush before he joined hedge fund Bridgewater Associates and rose to become CEO.

And Powell McCormick has a long background in finance. □



Former counselor to the President of the United States Dina Powell McCormick smiles during the Women's Global Development and Prosperity (W-GDP) Initiative Roundtable, Sept. 23, 2019, in New York.

Associated Press

Brooks Koepka returns to PGA Tour under stiff financial penalty just 5 weeks after leaving LIV

By **DOUG FERGUSON**
AP Golf Writer

HONOLULU (AP) — Brooks Koepka is returning to the PGA Tour just five weeks after bolting from LIV Golf, agreeing to a one-time program for elite players that comes with a financial penalty that could rank among the largest in sports. Koepka plans to resume his PGA Tour career in the Farmers Insurance Open at Torrey Pines at the end of the month.

But he will not be eligible for PGA Tour equity grants for five years, he will not receive FedEx Cup bonus money in 2026 and he cannot play signature events unless he earns his way in.

The out-of-pocket cost is a \$5 million charity donation to be decided jointly with the tour.

The financial repercussions no access to equity or FedEx Cup bonus money this year is a potential loss the tour puts at \$50 million and upward.

Brian Rolapp, the CEO of PGA Tour Enterprises, outlined the agreement with Koepka and details of the "Returning Member Program" in a memo to play-



Associated Press

ers Monday. A copy of the memo was obtained by The Associated Press.

Rolapp made clear, however, this was a one-time program and not a precedent.

It applies only to players who have won majors or The Players Championship from 2022 through 2025, meaning Bryson DeChambeau, Jon Rahm and Cameron Smith would be the only LIV players who could

return. They have three weeks to decide.

Koepka will have to earn his way into \$20 million signature events. He would be added to the field to not take a spot from another tour player.

The board, which has a majority of players led by Tiger Woods, approved the program.

Rolapp described Koepka's case as a "unique situation." He said the so-

lution was guided by what would make the PGA Tour stronger, preserving playing opportunities for current members and responding to fans who want to see all the best players together. But this is far from an open path back for LIV players if they want to return. The program had the tone of an ultimatum for the trio of stars still in the Saudi-funded league.

"Only those who have re-

cently achieved the highest accomplishments in the game are eligible to return to the PGA Tour, where the best players in the world compete, week in and week out," Rolapp wrote. "This is a one-time, defined window and is not a precedent for future situations. "Once the door closes, there is no promise that this path will be available again."

This can be viewed as catering to the stars the tour has a history of that with the Player Impact Program and sponsor exemptions but the stars are limited to a four-year window of big wins.

Those ineligible to return under this program assuming they even want to include Dustin Johnson, Phil Mickelson, seven-time LIV winner Joaquin Niemann, Ryder Cup player Tyrrell Hatton of England and Patrick Reed. Koepka, a five-time major champion, was one of the biggest names to sign with LIV Golf in June 2022. He said in a 2023 podcast with boxer Jake Paul that his contract was for at least \$100 million and that "I signed for the dough."□

College watchdog group rejected 500-plus NIL deals worth nearly \$15 million, but cleared many more

By **EDDIE PELLIS**
AP National Writer

The College Sports Commission has rejected nearly \$15 million in name, image, likeness agreements since it started evaluating them over the summer, representing more than 10% of the value of all the deals it has analyzed and closed. The CSC released its latest statistics Monday, saying it did not clear 524 deals worth \$14.94 million, while clearing 17,321 worth \$127.21 million. All the data was current as of Jan. 1.

The numbers came against the backdrop of a "reminder" memo the commission sent to athletic directors last week, citing "serious concerns" about contracts being offered to athletes

before they had been cleared through the commission's NIL Go platform.

The CSC is in charge of evaluating all deals worth more than \$600 that are offered by third-party businesses that are often affiliated with the schools recruiting the players.

"Without prejudging any particular deal, the CSC has serious concerns about some of the deal terms being contemplated and the consequences of those deals for the parties involved," the Friday night memo said.

The CSC said primary reasons for deals not being cleared were that they lacked a valid business purpose; they didn't directly activate a player's

NIL rights, instead "warehousing" them for future use; and that players were being paid at levels that weren't "commensurate with similarly situated individuals."

The memo reminded ADs that signing players to deals that hadn't been cleared by the CSC left the players "vulnerable to deals not being cleared, promises not being able to be kept, and eligibility being placed at risk."

Other statistics from the latest report:

There were 10 deals in arbitration as of Dec. 31, eight of which have since been withdrawn. All involved a resolved administrative issue at one school not named by the CSC.

52% of deals submitted to NIL Go were resolved within 24 hours.

73% of deals reached resolution within seven days following submission of all re-

quired information.

56% of the 10,848 athletes who have at least one cleared deal play football or men's basketball.□



NCAA logo displayed on the fence before an NCAA softball game between Jacksonville and FGCU, March 24, 2024, in Jacksonville, Fla.

Associated Press

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Princess Casino Aruba Celebrates Grand Opening with Royal Night of Entertainment



Princess Casino Aruba located at The Embassy Suites is proud to announce its Official Grand Opening Celebration on Wednesday, January 14, 2026, inviting locals and tourists alike to experience a night of glamour, music, and excitement on the Palm Beach strip.

The celebration will begin at 6:00 PM, welcoming guests with a festive atmosphere, live entertainment, and exclusive opening-night promotions. The evening will feature live music by Rincon Boys, raffle prizes, and Triple Points for all Royal Members, and much more making it a night not to be missed.

The official opening program will take place at 7:00 PM, including a ribbon-cutting ceremony and opening remarks. At 7:30 PM, the party continues as the casino floor comes alive with music, games, and celebrations throughout the night.

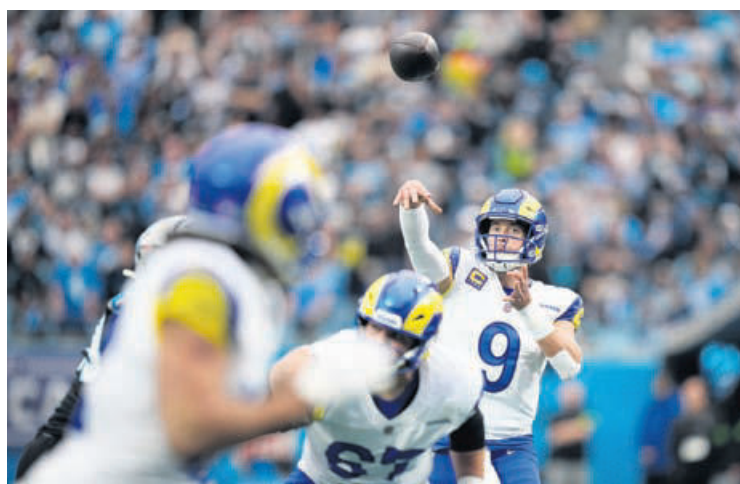
Guests will enjoy a full entertainment experience including Blackjack, Roulette, Bingo, slot machines, and the island's only Baccarat table on the Palm Beach strip. In addition, visitors can participate in exciting prize giveaways and learn more about upcoming promotions, including the casino's car raffle and progressive Bingo jackpots.

Princess Casino Aruba aims to be a place where locals and visitors come together to enjoy high-quality entertainment in a welcoming and elegant environment, supported by a friendly and professional team.

Everyone is invited to attend this special celebration and experience a truly royal night. □



Matthew Stafford ends record-tying longest wait for first-team AP NFL All-Pro honor



Los Angeles Rams quarterback Matthew Stafford (9) throws a pass during the first half of an NFL divisional playoff football game against the Carolina Panthers, Saturday, Jan. 10, 2026, in Charlotte, N.C.

Associated Press

By **JOSH DUBOW**
AP Pro Football Writer

Matthew Stafford has spent a career accumulating staggering numbers with more than 64,000 yards passing, more than 400 TD passes and a Super Bowl title.

One accolade he hadn't achieved until this season was being named a first-team AP NFL All-Pro. Stafford was picked for the team on Saturday, ending the longest wait ever for a quarterback to get that honor for the first time. Stafford just completed his 17th season in the NFL since being drafted first overall by

Detroit in 2009, eclipsing Fran Tarkenton's 15-year wait for his first All-Pro honor in 1975. According to the Elias Sports Bureau, only two other players had waited 15 years or more for their first All-Pro selection with Stafford tying kicker Gary Anderson for the longest wait. Anderson was also named All-Pro in his 17th season in 1998 when he made all 35 field goal tries and 59 extra points in the regular season before missing a potential game-sealing kick that helped cost Minnesota in the NFC title game.

The All-Pro selection could

also boost Stafford's Hall of Fame case. No modern quarterback has ever made the Hall without getting one of these honors: first-team All-Pro; AP NFL MVP; AP NFL Offensive Player of the Year or Super Bowl MVP.

Stafford now has one and could add another when the MVP is announced at NFL Honors on Feb. 5. From 2013-23, the first-team All-Pro quarterback also won the MVP but that streak was snapped last year when Josh Allen won the MVP after Lamar Jackson was picked as the All-Pro. □